

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A ribbon cartridge for use in a card printer comprising:

- a cartridge housing including a supply spool enclosure, a take-up spool enclosure, a pair of ribbon guides, and a gap between the ribbon guides and the supply and take-up spool enclosures;

- a supply spool contained in the supply spool enclosure;

- a take-up spool contained in the take-up spool enclosure; and

- a supply of ribbon that extends from the supply spool, over the ribbon guides and the gap, and to the take-up spool.

2. The ribbon cartridge of claim 1, wherein the gap is defined by interior side walls of the spool and take-up enclosures, wherein the ribbon guides are formed by exposed top surfaces of the interior side walls.

3. The ribbon cartridge of claim 1, wherein the ribbon guides are positioned above and between the supply and take-up spools.

4. The ribbon cartridge of claim 1, wherein the gap is defined by interior side walls of the spool and

take-up enclosures and is accessible from bottom and rear sides of the housing.

5. The ribbon cartridge of claim 4, wherein the gap is further defined by a plate joining the interior side walls of the supply and take-up spool enclosures.

6. The ribbon cartridge of claim 1, wherein the printhead gap has a width at the ribbon guides of approximately 0.75 inches.

7. The ribbon cartridge of claim 1 including a card cleaner roller rotatably supported by the housing adjacent a top surface of the housing.

8. The ribbon cartridge of claim 7, wherein the card cleaner roller is supported at a rear end adjacent a rear wall of the housing and at a front end adjacent a front wall of the housing.

9. The ribbon cartridge of claim 7, wherein the card cleaner roller includes a debris-collecting exterior surface.

10. The ribbon cartridge of claim 7, wherein the card cleaner roller is removable.

11. The ribbon cartridge of claim 1, wherein the supply and take-up spool enclosures each include a rear opening for receiving a core of each of the supply and take-up spools, respectively.

12. The ribbon cartridge of claim 1, including a rotation inhibitor engaging the supply spool and providing resistance to rotation of the supply spool.

13. The ribbon cartridge of claim 12, wherein the rotation inhibitor includes a tab member extending from the housing.

14. The ribbon cartridge of claim 1 including a rotation inhibitor engaging the take-up spool and providing resistance to rotation of the take-up spool.

15. The ribbon cartridge of claim 14, wherein the rotation inhibitor includes a tab member extending from the housing.

16. The ribbon cartridge of claim 1, wherein the supply spool enclosure includes an opening through which the ribbon extends.

17. The ribbon cartridge of claim 1, wherein the take-up spool enclosure includes an opening through which the ribbon extends.

18. The ribbon cartridge of claim 17, wherein the housing includes a finger hold.

19. The ribbon cartridge of claim 1, wherein the supply and take-up spool enclosures have different exterior shapes.

20. The ribbon cartridge of claim 1 including a supply circuit having a memory containing supply information relating to the ribbon cartridge.

21. The ribbon cartridge of claim 20, wherein the supply circuit is mounted to the supply spool or the take-up spool.

22. The ribbon cartridge of claim 20, wherein the supply information includes a lot code, a supplier code, a ribbon type, a security code, a printer configuration setting, a number of prints completed, or a number of prints remaining.

23. The ribbon cartridge of claim 20, wherein the memory of the supply circuit includes a memory bank, the memory bank having a limit as to a number of times data can be written thereto.

28. The ribbon cartridge of claim 20, wherein:

one of the supply and take-up spools includes a core and a ribbon guide that extends substantially perpendicularly from the core; and

the supply circuit is mounted to the ribbon guide and includes an opening through which the core extends.

29. The ribbon cartridge of claim 21, wherein the supply circuit is configured to break upon removal from the ribbon cartridge.

30. A ribbon cartridge for use in a card printer comprising:

a cartridge housing including front and rear walls; and

a cleaner roller rotatably supported between the front and rear walls.

31. The ribbon cartridge of claim 30, wherein the cleaner roller includes a debris-collecting surface.

32. The ribbon cartridge of claim 30, wherein the cleaner roller is mounted adjacent a top side of the housing.

33. The ribbon cartridge of claim 30, wherein the cleaner roller includes front and rear ends that are

each received in an aperture of the respective front and rear wall of the housing.

34. The ribbon cartridge of claim 33, wherein the apertures are shaped to allow the cleaner roller to move between a receiving position and a cleaning position.

35. The ribbon cartridge of claim 30, wherein: the housing includes a spool enclosure and a cover extending over an opening of the spool enclosure; and the cleaner roller is positioned above the cover.

36. The ribbon cartridge of claim 30, wherein:
the housing includes supply and take-up spool enclosures each having an interior side wall separated from each other by a gap, and a plate connecting the interior side walls;
a supply spool contained in the supply enclosure;
a take-up spool contained in the take-up spool enclosure; and
print ribbon having a first end wound on supply spool, a second end wound on the take-up spool, and a middle portion extending between the supply and take-up spools and over the interior side walls.

37. The ribbon cartridge of claim 36, wherein the interior side walls include ribbon guide members

positioned above and between the supply and take-up spools, the print ribbon supported on the ribbon guide members.

38. The ribbon cartridge of claim 36 including a rotation inhibitor engaging the supply or take-up spool, the rotation inhibitor providing resistance to rotation of the spool.

39. The ribbon cartridge of claim 38, wherein the rotation inhibitor includes a tab member extending from the housing.

40. The ribbon cartridge of claim 30, wherein:
the housing includes a spool enclosure that includes the front and rear walls, an interior side wall, a bottom, and an exterior side wall, the front and rear walls each including an opening; and
a spool including a core having a front portion extending through the opening in the front wall and a rear portion extending through the opening in the rear wall.

41. The ribbon cartridge of claim 40, wherein the spool enclosure includes a core support wall extending from the bottom of the spool enclosure, the core support wall positioned between the front and rear walls.

42. The ribbon cartridge of claim 40 including a rotation inhibitor engaging the core of the spool, the rotation inhibitor providing resistance to rotation of the spool.

43. The ribbon cartridge of claim 42, wherein the rotation inhibitor includes a tab member extending from the spool enclosure.

44. The ribbon cartridge of claim 30, wherein the housing includes a finger grab.

45. A ribbon cartridge for use in a card printer comprising:

- a housing including a spool enclosure having an interior side wall, a bottom, an exterior side wall, and front and rear walls, the front and rear walls each including an opening; and

- a spool including a core having a front portion extending through the opening in the front wall of the spool enclosure and a rear portion extending through the opening in the rear wall.

46. The ribbon cartridge of claim 45, wherein the spool enclosure includes a core support wall extending from the bottom of the spool enclosure, the core

support wall positioned between the front and rear walls.

47. The ribbon cartridge of claim 45 including a rotation inhibitor engaging the core of the spool, the rotation inhibitor providing resistance to rotation of the spool.

48. The ribbon cartridge of claim 47, wherein the rotation inhibitor includes a tab member extending from the spool enclosure.

49. The ribbon cartridge of claim 45 including a cleaner roller rotatably supported between the front and rear walls.

50. The ribbon cartridge of claim 49, wherein the cleaner roller includes a debris-collecting surface.

51. The ribbon cartridge of claim 49, wherein the cleaner roller is mounted adjacent a top side of the housing.

52. The ribbon cartridge of claim 49, wherein the cleaner roller includes front and rear ends that are each received in an aperture of the respective front and rear wall of the housing

53. The ribbon cartridge of claim 52, wherein the apertures are shaped to allow the cleaner roller to move between a receiving position and a cleaning position.

54. The ribbon cartridge of claim 49, wherein:
the housing includes a cover extending over an
opening of the spool enclosure; and
the cleaner roller is positioned above the cover.